MARVEL
$1.50 US
17
MID DEC
THE CROSS-TIME CAPER
EXCALIBUR
SEARCH FOR A HERO?
I HOPE TO TRAVEL, HELP CHILDREN, AND WORK FOR WORLD PEACE...
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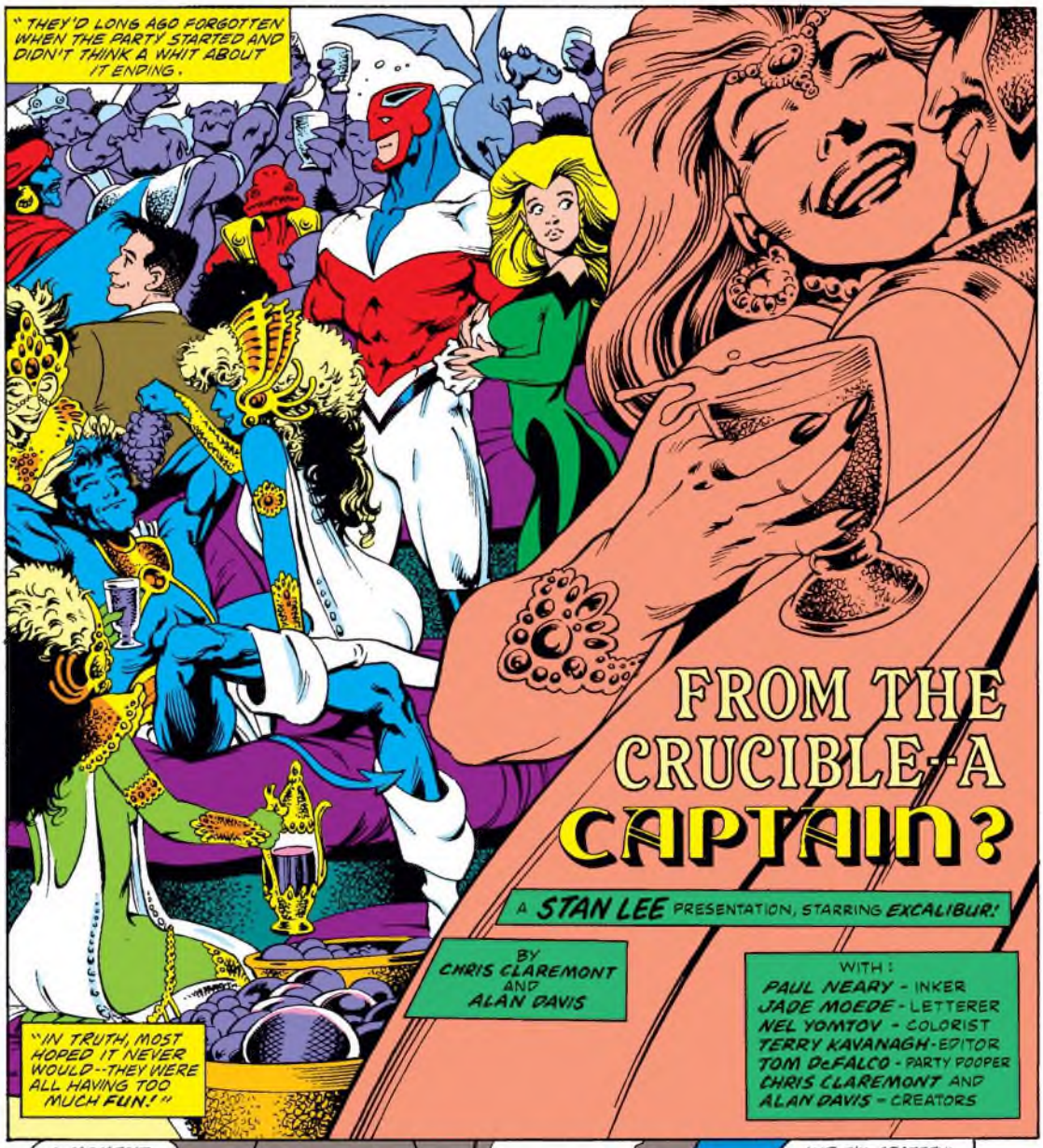
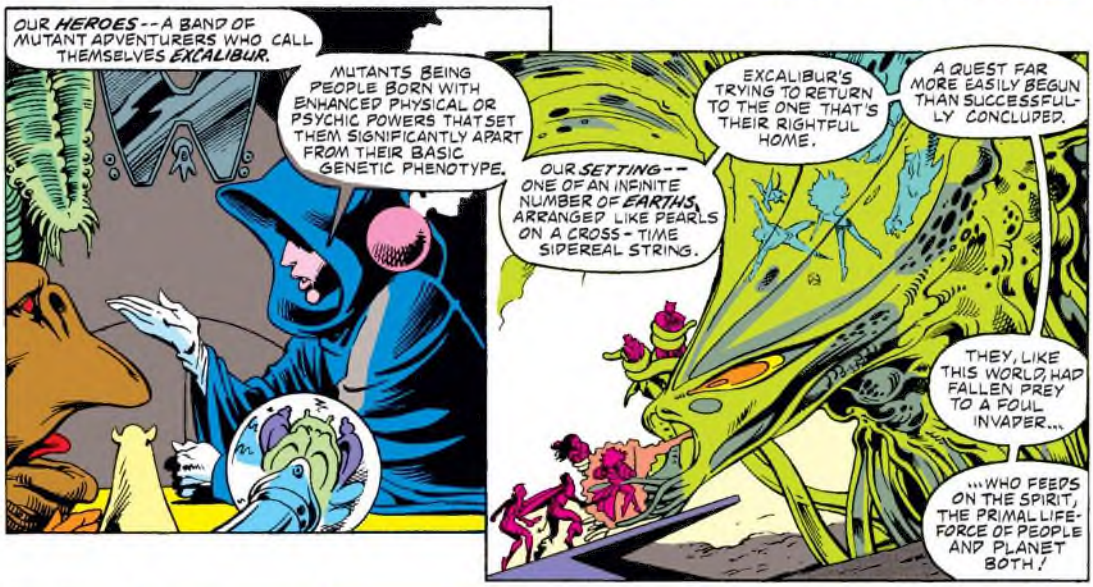
ALAN DAVIS + NEARY


" THEY'D LONG AGO FORGOTTEN WHEN THE PARTY STARTED AND DIDN'T THINK A WHIT ABOUT IT ENDING.
FROM THE CRUCIBLE--A CAPTAIN?
A STAN LEE PRESENTATION, STARRING EXCALIBUR!
BY CHRIS CLAREMONT AND ALAN DAVIS
WITH: PAUL NEARY - INKER JADE MOEDE - LETTERER NEL YOMTOV - COLORIST TERRY KAVANAGH - EDITOR TOM DeFALCO - PARTY POOPER CHRIS CLAREMONT AND ALAN DAVIS - CREATORS
"IN TRUTH, MOST HOPED IT NEVER WOULD--THEY WERE ALL HAVING TOO MUCH FUN!"

A MOMENT, STORY-TELLER.
THIS SCENE IS SIGNIFI-CANTLY AT VARIANCE...
...WITH PREVIOUS DATA TRANSFER.
AND I'M GRATEFUL, NOBLE SENTIENTS, FOR YOUR FOREBEARANCE...
...IN PERMITTING THIS BRIEF--BUT UNAVOIDABLE--INTERRUPTION.
DELIGHT, TALE SO FAR, IS!
NOT DESIRING A BIT TO MISS!
NOR SHALL YOU, I PROMISE.

BUT BEFORE I RELATE WHAT HAPPENED NEXT, O PATIENT FRIENDS...
...IT'S ONLY FAIR I SET THE STAGE...
...FOR THOSE WHO MIGHT'VE COME IN LATE.


OUR HEROES--A BAND OF MUTANT ADVENTURERS WHO CALL THEMSELVES EXCALIBUR.
MUTANTS BEING PEOPLE BORN WITH ENHANCED PHYSICAL OR PSYCHIC POWERS THAT SET THEM SIGNIFICANTLY APART FROM THEIR BASIC GENETIC PHENOTYPE.
OUR SETTING--ONE OF AN INFINITE NUMBER OF EARTHS, ARRANGED LIKE PEARLS ON A CROSS-TIME SIDEREAL STRING.
EXCALIBUR'S TRYING TO RETURN TO THE ONE THAT'S THEIR RIGHTFUL HOME.
A QUEST FAR MORE EASILY BEGUN THAN SUCCESSFULLY CONCLUDED.
THEY, LIKE THIS WORLD, HAD FALLEN PREY TO A FOUL INVADER...
...WHO FEEDS ON THE SPIRIT, THE PRIMAL LIFE-FORCE OF PEOPLE AND PLANET BOTH!

"ALL SEEMED LOST...
"...UNTIL NIGHT-CRAWLER HAD WHAT MUST HAVE SEEMED LIKE THE MADDEST OF INSPIRATIONS.

"THEIR FOE APPEARED ACTUALLY AFRAID OF PHOENIX.
"SO, GAMBLING THERE MUST BE GOOD REASON...
"...HE GAVE HER TO IT.

"KNOWING THAT IF HE'D GUESSED WRONG, THEY'D PAY FOR HIS MISTAKE WITH THEIR LIVES.
"BUT IT WASN'T EXCALIBUR WHO DIED THAT NIGHT."

WE--
--LIVE!
WHAT AN EXTRAORDINARY EXPERIENCE!
IT WAS AWFUL--
--AS THOUGH WE WERE MELTING, BODY AND SOUL--!
BUT RACHEL SAVED US!
CUTE STUNT, FUZZY.
YOU MIGHT AT LEAST HAVE WARNED--!
SORRY. NO TIME.
AND I COULDN'T RISK GIVING THAT HORROR THE OPPORTUNITY OF PREPARING ANY DEFENSE.
SLIMED AGAIN-- GROSS!

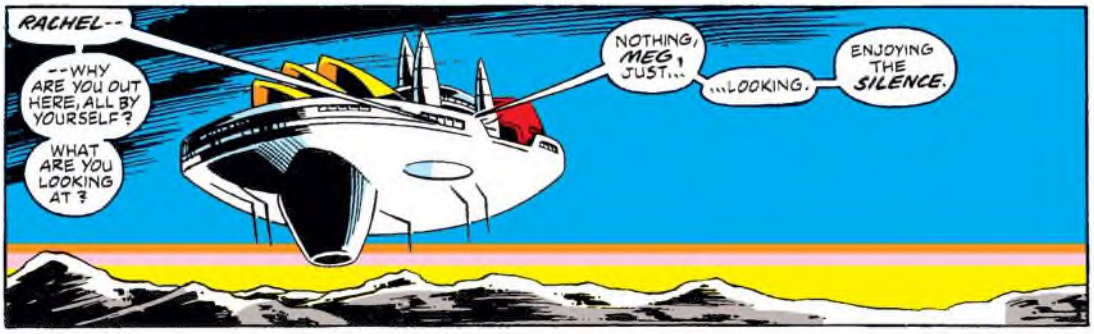
AND AFTER THE VICTORY. OF COURSE...
...CAME THE CELEBRATION.
IT WAS AS THOUGH SOME TERRIBLE MIASMA HAD BEEN LIFTED FROM THE LAND.
LIVES REDUCED TO THE DULLEST MONOCHROME...
... SUDDENLY BURST FORTH, FULL-BLOWN WITH COLOR.
AND THE PARTY THAT FOLLOWED...

"...PROVED A WILD WONDER TO BEHOLD."
CUTE LEGS, PROFFESSOR STUART.
EAT YOUR HEART OUT, LADDIE.

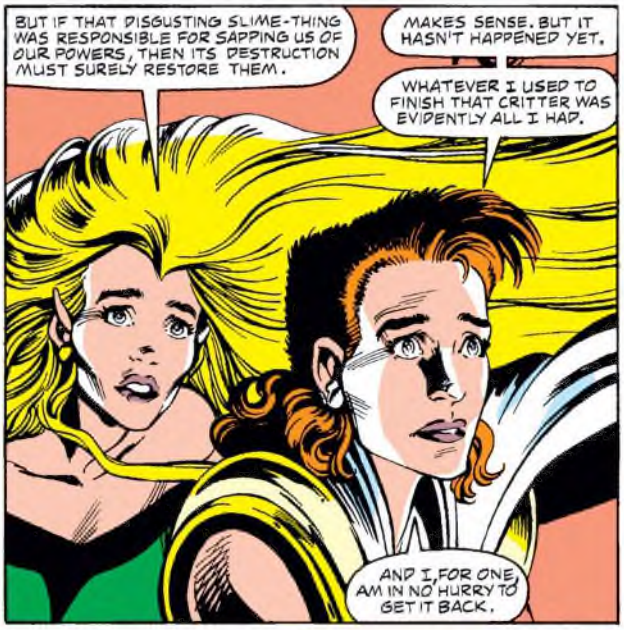
SO, SMALL ONE--YOU ARE MY INCARNATION IN FAIR KITTY'S NATIVE DIMENSION.
GUYS...
AND THINK AS HIGHLY OF HER, I SUSPECT.
UH, GUYS!
GRR
BEHAVE, OKAY?

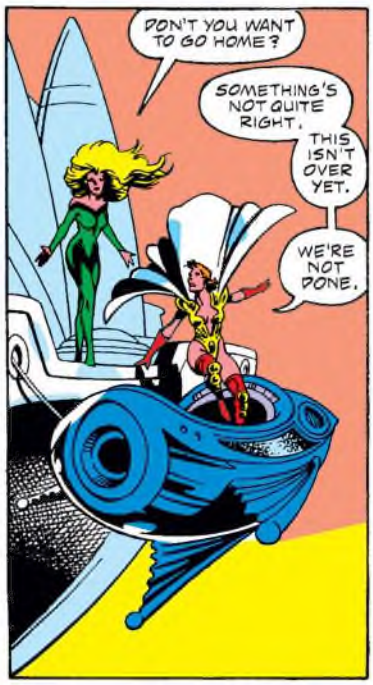
I'M AFRAID I'VE GROWN TO PREFER THE LIFE OF A PIRATE TO THAT OF A PRINCESS.
KYMRI... A-HEM!
I'D MUCH RATHER MIS-BEHAVE.
GRR!

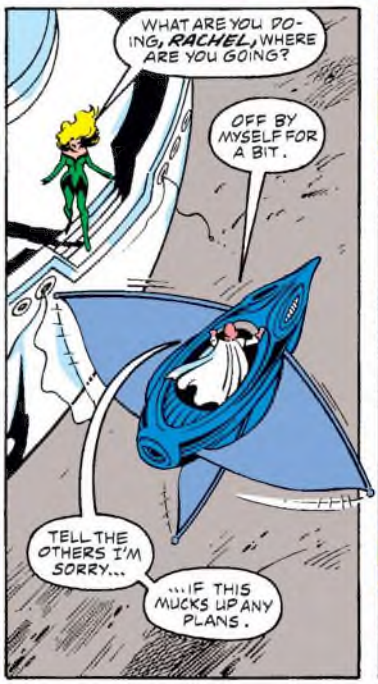
"BUT ADMIST THE REVELRY...
"...ONE FIGURE STOOD ALONE.
"A PART OF THE TEAM--
"--IN LARGE MEASURE ITS' REASON FOR BEING--
"--YET EVER APART FROM IT."


RACHEL--
--WHY ARE YOU OUT HERE, ALL BY YOURSELF?
WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT?
NOTHING, MEG, JUST...
...LOOKING.
ENJOYING THE SILENCE.

ARE YOU JOKING? IT'S A MADHOUSE IN THERE!
DIFFERENT KIND OF SILENCE.
I'VE NEVER KNOWN SUCH... QUIET.
WITHOUT MY PSI POWERS AS PHOENIX...
...I CAN'T HEAR ANYONE'S THOUGHTS.
I'VE JUST MY PHYSICAL SENSES, LIKE EVERYONE ELSE.
IT'S SUCH A STRANGE SENSATION, BEING "HEADBLIND."

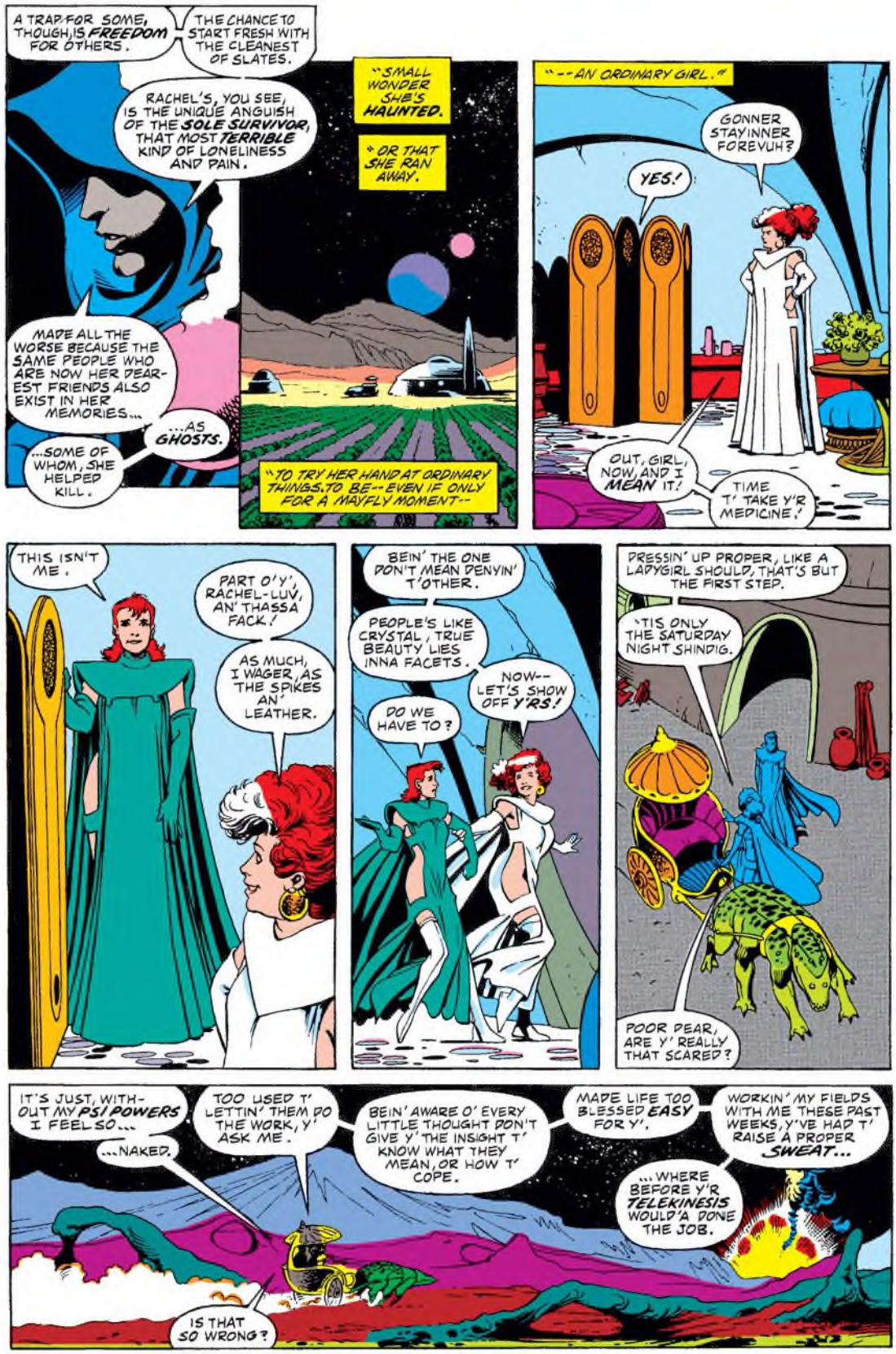

BUT IF THAT DISGUSTING SLIME-THING WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR SAPPING US OF OUR POWERS, THEN ITS DESTRUCTION MUST SURELY RESTORE THEM.
MAKES SENSE. BUT IT HASN'T HAPPENED YET.
WHATEVER I USED TO FINISH THAT CRITTER WAS EVIDENTLY ALL I HAD.
AND I, FOR ONE, AM IN NO HURRY TO GET IT BACK.


DON'T YOU WANT TO GO HOME?
SOMETHING'S NOT QUITE RIGHT.
THIS ISN'T OVER YET.
WE'RE NOT DONE.

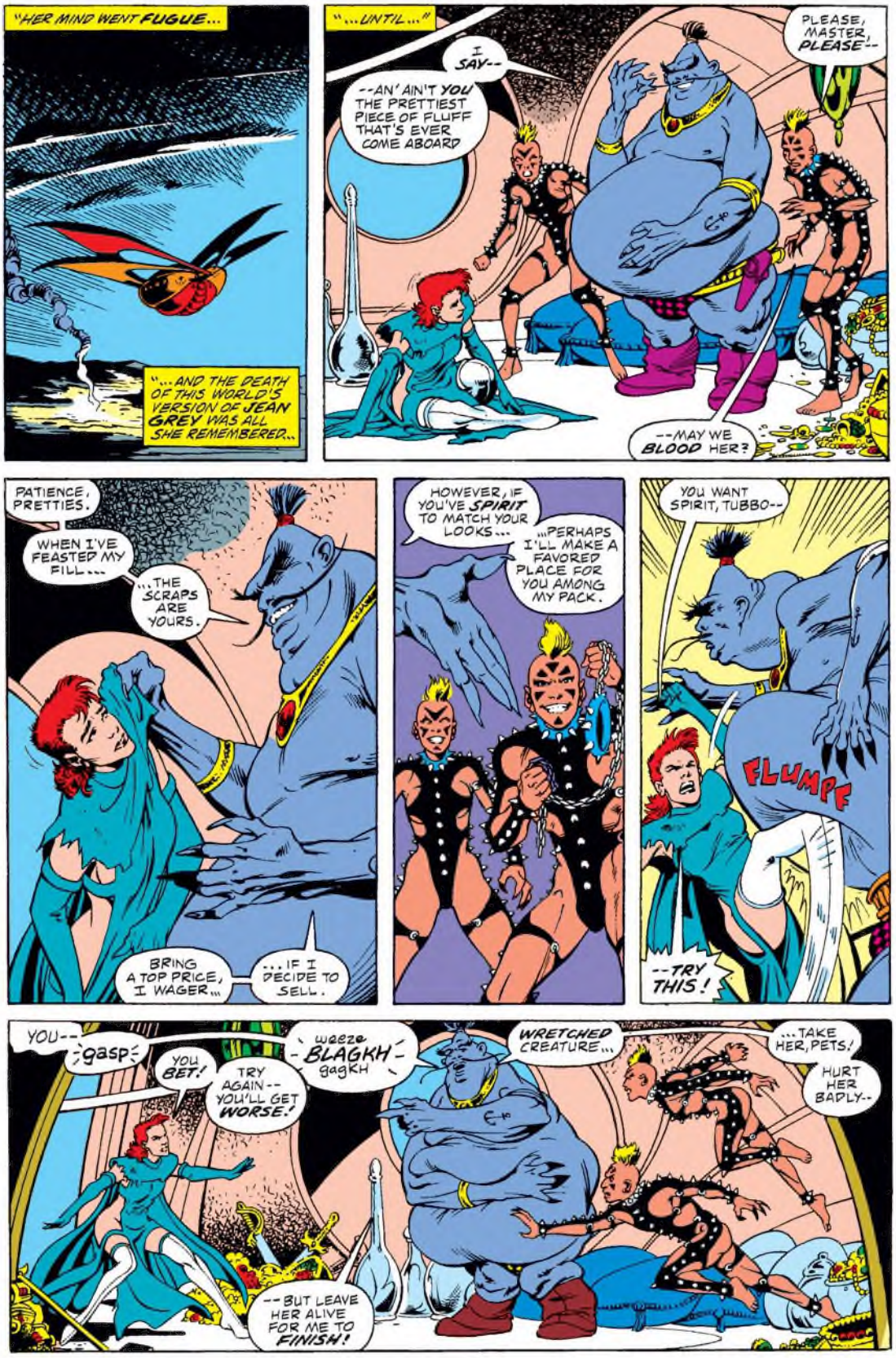

WHAT ARE YOU DOING, RACHEL, WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
OFF BY MYSELF FOR A BIT.
TELL THE OTHERS I'M SORRY...
...IF THIS MUCKS UP ANY PLANS.

BUT IT'S SOMETHING I HAVE TO DO.
BUT IF ANYTHING HAPPENS--
--RACHEL, WITHOUT YOU--
--WE'RE TRAPPED HERE!

WHO, YOU MIGHT WONDER, IS THIS "RACHEL?"
AND WHAT MAKES HER SO CRUCIAL TO EXCALIBUR, AND MY TALE?
SHE CALLS HERSELF, "PHOENIX"...
...BECAUSE SHE IS THE PHOENIX.
MERCY!
THE GREAT DEVOUR-ER! AYAIE!
:gasp!:
"HER MOTHER IS JEAN GREY...
...THE FIRST HUMAN TO BOND WITH THAT ULTIMATE PRIMAL COSMIC FORCE--
"--ONLY, TRAGIC-ALLY, TO BE OVER-WHELMED BY THE DARKEST NATURE OF ITS POWER...
"...AND TRANSFORMED INTO DARK PHOENIX.
"RACHEL HERSELF WAS BORN INTO A FUTURE ERA WHERE MUTANTS WERE OUTLAWED--
"--AND SHE HER-SELF FORCED TO BECOME A 'HOUND'.
"...USING HER TELEPATHY TO HUNT THEM DOWN.
"BUT SHE MANAGED TO ESCAPE DOWN THE TIMESTREAM.
"IN A DESPERATE ATTEMPT TO SAVE EARTH'S FUTURE BY CHANGING ITS PAST...
"...SHE FIRST CONTACTED, AND LATER JOINED, THEIR PREMIER TEAM OF MUTANT HEROES--
"--THE UNCANNY X-MEN!
"AND AFTER THEY WERE KILLED...
"...TO KEEP THEIR DREAM ALIVE (OF A WORLD WHERE ALL ITS PEOPLE, MUTANT AND OTHERWISE, COULD LIVE TO-GETHER IN PEACE)...
... SHE--ALONG WITH CAPTAIN BRITAIN...
"...NIGHTCRAWLER...
"...MEGGAN...
"AND SHADOWCAT--
"--BANDED TOGETHER AS EXCALIBUR."


A TRAP FOR SOME, THOUGH, IS FREEDOM FOR OTHERS.
THE CHANCE TO START FRESH WITH THE CLEANEST OF SLATES.
RACHEL'S, YOU SEE, IS THE UNIQUE ANGUISH OF THE SOLE SURVIVOR, THAT MOST TERRIBLE KIND OF LONELINESS AND PAIN.
MADE ALL THE WORSE BECAUSE THE SAME PEOPLE WHO ARE NOW HER DEAREST FRIENDS ALSO EXIST IN HER MEMORIES...
...AS GHOSTS.
...SOME OF WHOM, SHE HELPED KILL.
"SMALL WONDER SHE'S HAUNTED.
* OR THAT SHE RAN AWAY.
"TO TRY HER HAND AT ORDINARY THINGS.TO BE--EVEN IF ONLY FOR A MAYFLY MOMENT--
"--AN ORDINARY GIRL."
GONNER STAYINNER FOREVUH?
YES!
OUT, GIRL, NOW, AND I MEAN IT!
TIME T' TAKE Y'R MEDICINE!
THIS ISN'T ME.
PART O' Y', RACHEL-LUV, AN' THASSA FACK!
AS MUCH, I WAGER, AS THE SPIKES AN' LEATHER.
BEIN' THE ONE DON'T MEAN DENYIN' T'OTHER.
PEOPLE'S LIKE CRYSTAL, TRUE BEAUTY LIES INNA FACETS.
NOW-- LET'S SHOW OFF Y'RS!
DO WE HAVE TO?
DRESSIN' UP PROPER, LIKE A LADYGIRL SHOULD, THAT'S BUT THE FIRST STEP.
'TIS ONLY THE SATURDAY NIGHT SHINDIG.
POOR DEAR, ARE Y' REALLY THAT SCARED?
IT'S JUST, WITHOUT MY PSI POWERS I FEEL SO...
...NAKED.
TOO USED T' LETTIN' THEM DO THE WORK, Y' ASK ME.
BEIN' AWARE O' EVERY LITTLE THOUGHT DON'T GIVE Y' THE INSIGHT T' KNOW WHAT THEY MEAN, OR HOW T' COPE.
MADE LIFE TOO BLESSED EASY FOR Y'.
WORKIN' MY FIELDS WITH ME THESE PAST WEEKS, Y'VE HAD T' RAISE A PROPER SWEAT...
...WHERE BEFORE Y'R TELEKINESIS WOULD'A DONE THE JOB.
IS THAT SO WRONG?

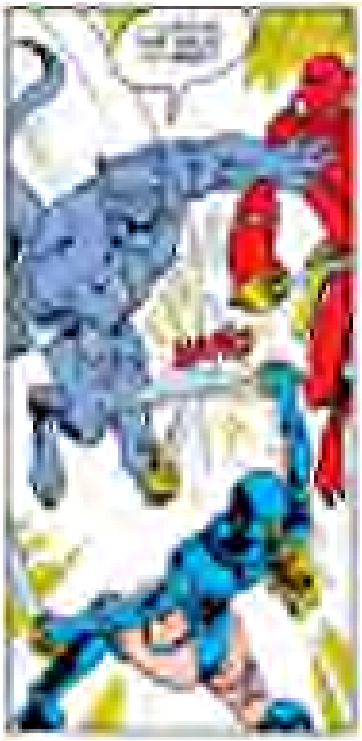
Y'RE BETTER F'R HAVIN' THE POWERS, TRUE ENOUGH.
THE POINT IS NOT T'NEED 'EM -- MERCY?!
TOWN!
SLAVERS!
WE'VE NOT SEEN THEIR LIKE F'R AGES!
THEY FEARED PRINCESS ANJULIE TOO MUCH.
BUT NOW SHE'S DEPOSED AN' SLAIN--!
WE'VE GOTTER BE AWAY FROM HERE, BEFORE THEY--
GWUH!
SHZAK!
OH!
OWHW!
HOUNDS!
THOSE SHAPES--
--NO, IT CAN'T BE--
--THAT WORLD'S DEAD!
SLAKT!
MAAA!
MOMMA!
NO!
NOT AGAIN!


"HER MIND WENT FUGUE...
"...AND THE DEATH OF THIS WORLD'S VERSION OF JEAN GREY WAS ALL SHE REMEMBERED...
"...UNTIL..."
I SAY--
--AN' AIN'T YOU THE PRETTIEST PIECE OF FLUFF THAT'S EVER COME ABOARD
PLEASE, MASTER, PLEASE--
--MAY WE BLOOD HER?
PATIENCE, PRETTIES.
WHEN I'VE FEASTED MY FILL...
...THE SCRAPS ARE YOURS.
BRING A TOP PRICE, I WAGER...
...IF I DECIDE TO SELL.
HOWEVER, IF YOU'VE SPIRIT TO MATCH YOUR LOOKS...
...PERHAPS I'LL MAKE A FAVORED PLACE FOR YOU AMONG MY PACK.
YOU WANT SPIRIT, TUBBO--
FLUMPF
--TRY THIS!
YOU--
gasp
YOU BET!
TRY AGAIN -- YOU'LL GET WORSE!
waeze BLAGKH gagKH
WRETCHED CREATURE...
...TAKE HER, PETS!
HURT HER BADLY--
--BUT LEAVE HER ALIVE FOR ME TO FINISH!

I SAY, REG, ANYTHING DOING?
OH QUITE, CYRIL.
CAPTAIN'S PLAYING WITH HIS NEW TOY.
LUCKY BEGGAR. HE HAS ALL THE FUN.
SLAM EEK
WAM BAM
CRASH THUD
WELL, THAT IS THE POINT OF RANK, WOT?
TO HAVE ITS PRIVILEGES-- STREWTH!
SKRAM
DASH ME--
--THIS ISN'T RIGHT!
QUITE THE CONTRARY.
IT LOOKS AS RIGHT AS RIGHT CAN BE.
WHO WANTS TO BE NEXT TO JOIN 'EM?!

ZAM

ATLANTIS



NOT A MOVE, "COMRADES."
I'M SURE YOU CAN GUESS THE REST.

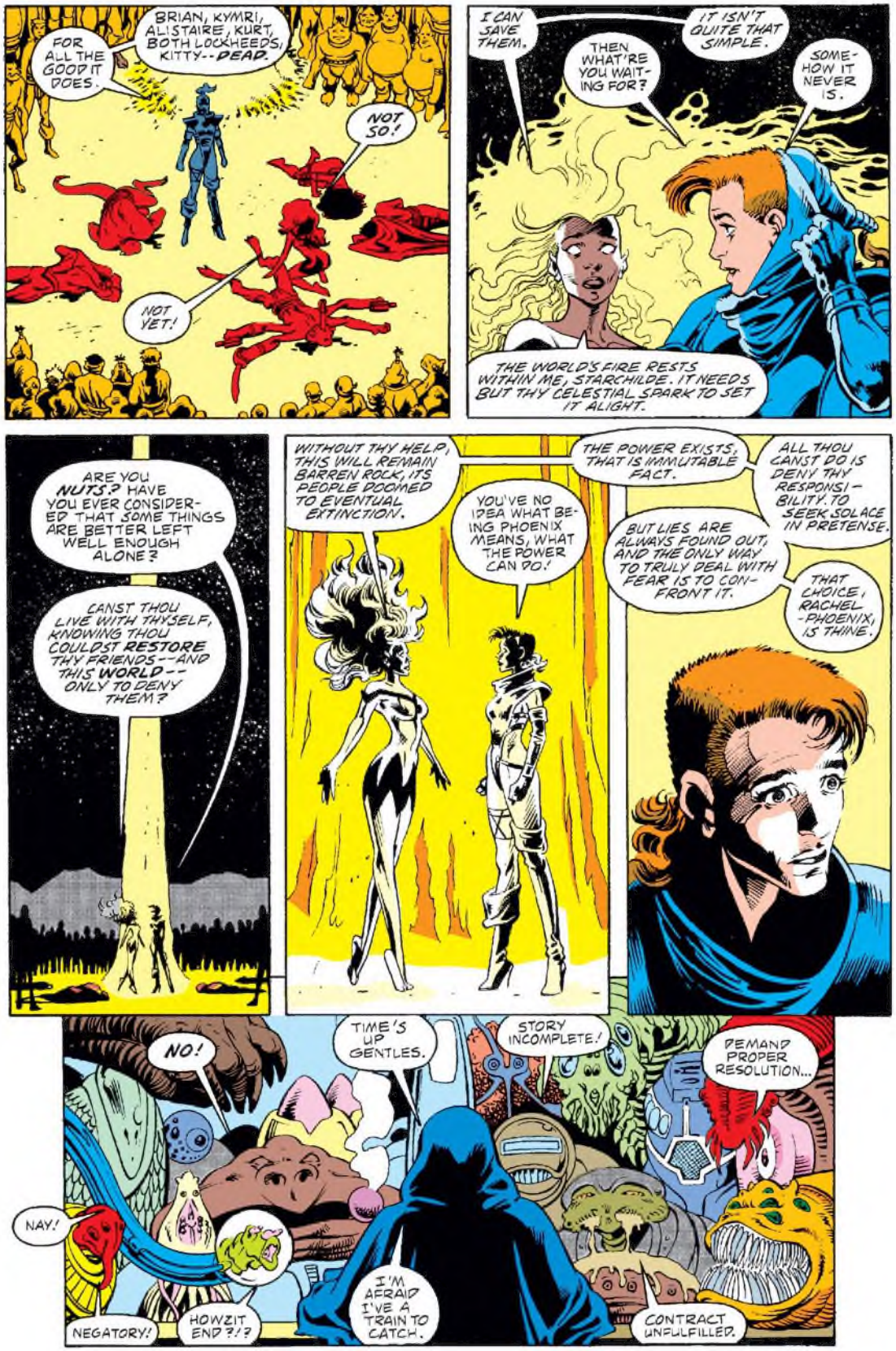
THAT'S THE DRILL.
YOU'RE A BRIGHT BUNCH, I LIKE THAT.
THAT REMAINS TO BE SEEN, LADY KYMRI.
ANYONE INTERESTED IN A TRADE, LIFE FOR LIFE?
YOU'LL NOT LEAVE THIS ENCAMPMENT ALIVE, WRETCH.

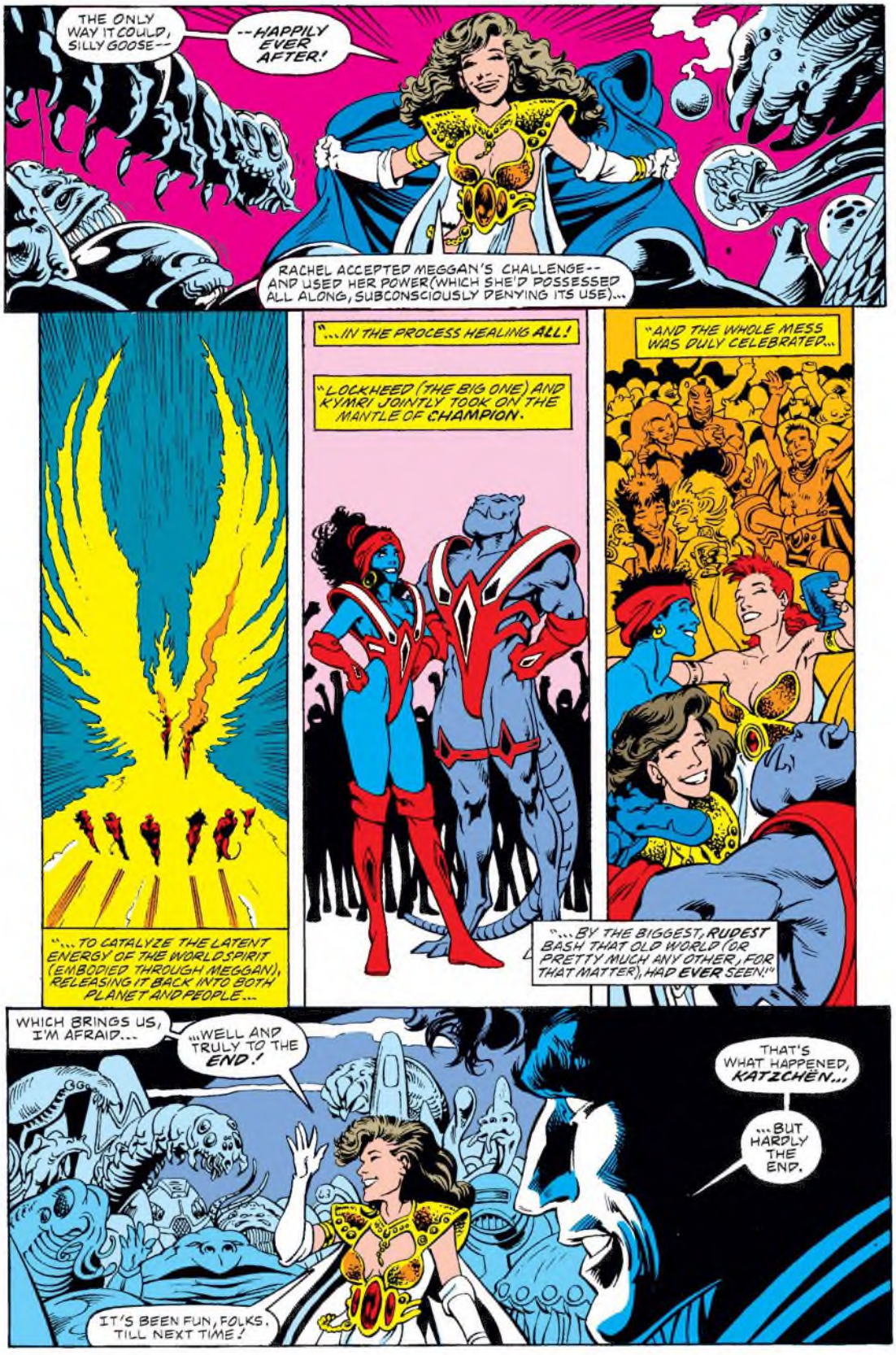
INDEED YES--
--BUT NOT THE WAY HE THINKS.
EVEN IF WE AGREE, HE'LL KILL HER ANYWAY.
THEN COME BACK FOR US.
ONLY ONE PLAY, THEN.
US ON THE OUTSIDE'LL HAVE TO MAKE IT.
HOYA, MASK-FACE. YOU BETTER BE AS GOOD FOR REAL...

...AS YOU WERE FOR FUN AND GAMES!

VAM
VAM
VAM
VAM
TRUST ME, KYMRI--

--I'M BETTER!


FOR ALL THE GOOD IT DOES.
BRIAN, KYMRI, ALISTAIRE, KURT, BOTH LOCKHEEDS, KITTY--DEAD.
NOT SO!
NOT YET!
I CAN SAVE THEM.
IT ISN'T QUITE THAT SIMPLE.
THEN WHAT'RE YOU WAITING FOR?
SOMEHOW IT NEVER IS.
THE WORLD'S FIRE RESTS WITHIN ME, STARCHILDE. IT NEEDS BUT THY CELESTIAL SPARK TO SET IT ALIGHT.
ARE YOU NUTS? HAVE YOU EVER CONSIDERED THAT SOME THINGS ARE BETTER LEFT WELL ENOUGH ALONE?
CANST THOU LIVE WITH THYSELF, KNOWING THOU COULDST RESTORE THY FRIENDS--AND THIS WORLD--ONLY TO DENY THEM?
WITHOUT THY HELP, THIS WILL REMAIN BARREN ROCK, ITS PEOPLE DOOMED TO EVENTUAL EXTINCTION.
YOU'VE NO IDEA WHAT BEING PHOENIX MEANS, WHAT THE POWER CAN DO!
THE POWER EXISTS, THAT IS IMMUTABLE FACT.
ALL THOU CANST DO IS DENY THY RESPONSIBILITY. TO SEEK SOLACE IN PRETENSE.
BUT LIES ARE ALWAYS FOUND OUT, AND THE ONLY WAY TO TRULY DEAL WITH FEAR IS TO CONFRONT IT.
THAT CHOICE, RACHEL-PHOENIX, IS THINE.
NO!
TIME'S UP GENTLES.
STORY INCOMPLETE!
DEMAND PROPER RESOLUTION...
NAY!
NEGATORY!
HOWZIT END?!?
I'M AFRAID I'VE A TRAIN TO CATCH.
CONTRACT UNFULFILLED.

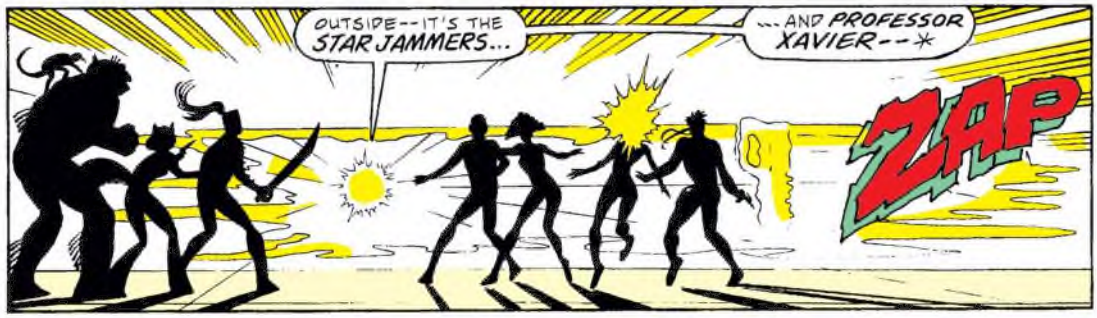

THE ONLY WAY IT COULD, SILLY GOOSE--
--HAPPILY EVER AFTER!
RACHEL ACCEPTED MEGGAN'S CHALLENGE-- AND USED HER POWER (WHICH SHE'D POSSESSED ALL ALONG, SUBCONSCIOUSLY DENYING ITS USE)...
"...TO CATALYZE THE LATENT ENERGY OF THE WORLD SPIRIT (EMBODIED THROUGH MEGGAN), RELEASING IT BACK INTO BOTH PLANET AND PEOPLE...
"...IN THE PROCESS HEALING ALL!
"LOCKHEED (THE BIG ONE) AND KYMRI JOINTLY TOOK ON THE MANTLE OF CHAMPION.
"AND THE WHOLE MESS WAS DULY CELEBRATED...
"...BY THE BIGGEST, RUDEST BASH THAT OLD WORLD (OR PRETTY MUCH ANY OTHER, FOR THAT MATTER), HAD EVER SEEN!"
WHICH BRINGS US, I'M AFRAID...
"WELL AND TRULY TO THE END!
THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED, KATZCHEN...
...BUT HARDLY THE END.
IT'S BEEN FUN, FOLKS. TILL NEXT TIME!

END OF THE STORY, THAT'S WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO THEM.
REST MATTERS ONLY TO US.
SURE, WE LOVED THAT WORLD...
...BUT WE DIDN'T BELONG. OUR WORK WAS DONE...

...TIME TO MOVE ON, KEEP TRYING TO FIND THE WAY BACK TO OUR WORLD--
--NIGHTCRAWLER, WHY ARE YOU LOOKING AT ME SO STRANGELY?
I WAS JUST REMEMBERING THE WIDE-EYED SLIP OF A GIRL WHO BOUNCED INTO PROFESSOR XAVIER'S SCHOOL NOT SO LONG AGO, ANNOUNCING "I'M HERE," AS IF SHE OWNED THE PLACE.

I WAS SUCH A KID!
REMEMBER HOW SCARED I WAS OF YOU?
SUPPLIES ARE ALL LOADED.
WIDGET'S PRIMED TO "JAUNT."
I'M GLAD YOU CAME, KATZCHEN. AND THAT YOU STUCK AROUND.

I PRAY WE'LL ALWAYS BE THERE TO STAND BY EACH OTHER. WHATEVER HERR PROFESSOR XAVIER THOUGHT WHEN HE ADMITTED YOU TO HIS SCHOOL, I'LL WAGER ANYTHING HE'D BE PROUD AS CAN BE OF HOW YOU'VE TURNED OUT.
OMIGOSH.
WIDGET-- STOP THE "JAUNT."!!
TOO LATE, HE'S TRIGGERED, WE'RE OUTTA HERE!


OUTSIDE--IT'S THE STAR JAMMERS...
...AND PROFESSOR XAVIER--*
ZAP

"--OH DARN!"
NEXT ISSUE: WILD, WILD WHEELS!